**Series**: The Book of Titus 2021

**Title**: Preserving the Family - Part 5: Devotion to God's Word

**Scripture**: Titus 1:9-11

**Description:** We live in a never-before-witnessed society that legally enforces the acceptance and endorsement of all opinions, true or not, secular and religious. How will the Christian Family be preserved?

# Read 7-11

# Introduction

You cannot separate your **time of worship** from **life as normal**. Though it's a mistake we continue to make... even here in Titus 1, all about church; eldership; (today - teaching)... since it's not about the **main concerns of our life** we may switch-off; or at least **switch worlds** ["finally in God's house again!" - and see little relationship to regular *life, home, work, marriage and children*. I hope we've been able to avoid that so far in the series - I've tried hard to show the direct implication for every Christian of what Paul writes to Titus about stewarding "the household"/family of God.

But today (even as we consider *the elders' relationship to the Word and teaching it*!) we will encounter (I think) our worst personal fear in normal life, - our greatest delight under threat:

(11) " *they are upsetting whole families*"

* Not emotionally 'upset', miff, unhappy families, but "overturned" - just like Jesus overturned the tables in the temple [John 2:15 *he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables*]
* Families - our home, and our closest relationships, where we return every evening and be ourselves - the people and place that we wish to be peaceful and harmonious and blessed...
* NIV = they are ***ruining*** *whole households;* CSB *=* ***overthrowing*** *whole households*
* **>> You can't separate** Faith from Life; the Church from Security; The Church who come together to worship as the family of God's children live in households in the world - being rescued from slavery to sin and the effects of sin - so that ... their ***Families*** are **not** ***overthrown*** - but demonstrate God's Good Design!
* Now that doesn't mean that there's no sin in the church congregation - look at Jesus cleansing the temple! But that's contrary to its design, and *specifically* why God places elders, in **humble** authority, to **lead** and **protect us** from error. We have to keep on reminding ourselves that coming to Sunday worship is not about escaping to the other universe, but growing for Life in the World as His Children, together. And this has to continue throughout the week.

# FCF: The Urgency of Good Oversight

* Read 10-11

10 For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. 11 They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach.

* What a contrast. In **v7** Titus has to appoint Overseers - "Stewards" of the Household of God - you'll find them among " loving husbands / respected fathers"
**VERSUS**
overturned households - "*they are upsetting whole families"*
* 2 questions to understand the threat before we can understand the solution:

**A. How many** men are *upsetting whole families*?

* (11) "*there are* *many*". And from diverse camps too. Jews and non-Jews.
	+ *some* are from "*the* Jewish *circumcision party*". **Religious people**.
	+ *others* are secular **Cretans**. cf v12: *a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons*

**B.** What are the many **doing**?

* (11b) "*teaching"*
* The Jews teach that they're validated by religion - obedience and abstinence before God.
* The Greeks teach the opposite! Self-indulgence. You're validated by the excess of sensation.
* ! MANY - looking for students; but not to **help;** rather in v11, "*teaching ...* ***for shameful gain***" (Do you remember v7: the overseer must not be " greedy for gain" - that's the same word. So different were the Christian leaders to be).
* ! Encircled by the many teachers, there's the Church - this strange community, neither stiff in self-righteousness nor loose in unrighteousness - Vindicated before God by the sacrifice of Jesus for their sins
* Yet - the many teachers are still there - as if the **passive influence** of the general culture was not enough - here are **active advocates** of ideas and behaviour that contradict God's design and threaten to overthrow families.
* **App:** *MANY ... TEACHING*: Is there a more apt description of the Church surrounded by passive and active teaching - especially since the advent of the Internet and social media ***in*** our households? We live in a never-before-witnessed society that legally *enforces* the acceptance and endorsement of all opinions : true or not : secular, religious, atheist - everything.
* (And no question - the innumerable voices in books and Internet is driven by the same motive - the overwhelming majority teaching for personal "gain". To expand their own popularity by increased followers : validated by Likes and Subscriptions.
* Have you heard the word for someone who has a large following online? "Influencer" - this is the new title everyone wants to be - an "influencer" - Well, there's MANY TEACHERS for you.
* THEREFORE - the Urgency of Good Oversight. When we talk about the significance of church and elders and teaching - you can't compartmentalise that into Sunday-application only. Good Oversight concerns Life.

# Proposition

Our proposition this morning must come from v9 - We will answer 2 questions:

**1. What does Good Oversight do** - (that's from the 2nd half of the verse)

able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it

**2. How is Good Oversight Powered** - (that's from the 1st half)

He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able

Elders here, and overseers in the home, the class, whatever sphere you have opportunity and platform - you are urgently useful for preserving God's Family.

## Pray

# What Good Oversight Does

* #1 - *Give instruction in sound doctrine* and
* #2 - *Rebuke those who contradict it* [ ie sound doctrine]
* "**Sound Doctrine**"
	+ people are afraid of 'doctrine' - but it just means teaching. People say doctrine divides - Yes: teaching does divide truth from error, but it's not Divisive: it doesn't SEEK to remove but to reconcile. It is Satan who split Adam and Eve from each other and God.
	+ "sound doctrine" is not an academic word, though we use it in academic circles to show off our knowledge and feel important.
		- "sound doctrine" means *healthy teaching*. Teaching that makes whole, keeps healthy, restores spiritual illness, preserves from death.
	+ So the overseer must know the difference between truth and error - healthy and unhealthy - and we'll get to the HOW later on. For now : WHAT does GOOD OVERSIGHT DO?
* So Good Oversight 1stly ***gives instruction*** in sound doctrine - so that the church will flourish in a healthy walk, with minds full of healthy teaching
* 2ndly (acc to v9) ***rebukes those who contradict it -*** because there will be opposition to it - "contradictory teaching".
	+ (e.g. Act 28:22 - Paul arrives in Rome - never before been there - and this is what the residents say to him

we desire to hear from you what your views are, for with regard to this sect we know that everywhere it is spoken against -

* i.e. opposition even precedes the gospel so that people are already suspicious before we have a chance; there have been damaging claims and accusations against it. So we see why Good Oversight needs to instruct and rebuke. That's why God has given authority!

## Exhort and rebuke

But I want to explain those words - ***Instruct*** and ***Rebuke*** :: especially in an age suspicious of authority!... Remember the kind of oversight that is needed: (7) *not arrogant[ly], angrily... but (8)...* etc

* So what is the work of Oversight - and I find this helpful:
* ***Instruct*** = the word "exhort" - to compellingly lead and draw
* ***Rebuke*** = the word "convict" - when someone sees themselves truly and being exposed comes under compelling conviction [not just slammed, but helped] (cf 1Cor 14:24-25)
	+ Both of those are terms used of the Holy Spirit, by the way, in John 16
	+ With very young children, you can simply command and require obedience - they are not able to reason and you have to reason for them.
	+ But with any regular adult in this world who is surrounded by many teachers, you're beginning at a disadvantage - cultural resentment to authority, misaligned worldviews inherited from who knows where, and suspicion against claims of absolute truth. Now long term mature Christians are familiar with the Word but the majority are immature! Understandings unshaped because they're hardly thinking and reading in the Word. And so our **Instruction** and **Rebuke** must not be like that of a salaried teacher, but an invested parent. "Compelling" means what you say makes sense, and is hard to rebut, and even attractive - God's word, when put rightly, is always attractive.
* Yet always with urgency, and sometimes severely - cf 1:13 *Rebuke them sharply - but note:* that they may be ***sound*** in the faith. (God speaks in Rev 3:19, *Those whom I love, I reprove*)
* It DOES MEAN that though, that for a church to be healthy, we must be ready for healthy teaching that **exhorts** and **rebukes**; both to give and receive... for the sake of our security!!

## [For thought]: Alternatives to healthy teaching:

Just before we look at HOW good oversight is powered... I'd like to motivate us by considering - what are the alternatives to **Healthy Teaching.**

**1. The alternative of a sick life!**

* *We all get sick; we all die, we understand thermodynamics that matter left to itself moves toward disorder and decay***. Ageing** and **decay** is not only a physical issue but spiritual too; Gen3 and Eph 2 remind us that God has separated His Spirit of Life from us so that we have spiritually died, and Rom 1 and 8 that He has handed us over to sin and decay; Now in 1Tim1:9-10 Paul contrasts the ***spiritually*** ***healthy life*** with its opposite - a life based on unhealthy teaching:

God's law is not laid down for the **just** but for the not-lawful and the not-obedient, for the not-godly and sinners, for the not-holy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, 10 the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary [heteros] to **sound doctrine**,

* That's the alternative sick life. **Healthy teaching** upholds the opposite - by implication a life of [ now just ask is this not what we want in the world??]: *law-keeping, obedience, godliness, holiness, sacred, loving family, respect-for-life, purity, heterosexuality, abolition of oppression and liberation, truth-speaking, integrity* etc - it's not about being good church-attendees and knowing doctrines!

The other reason we need healthy teaching is

**2. The alternative teaching that will fill the vacuum!**

* It's impossible to remain impervious to information. Unless your deaf and blind, and cannot read Braille. Experimental brain washing allowed a persons mind to be unwillingly altered by the "right" sensory stimulation, and overload of information - overcoming even the critical thinking of its subject. We don't need clinical brainwashing to form the mind - just time and enough influence. Today we have unparallelled information influencers, and without Healthy Teaching we're ignorantly, uncritically absorbing it (The power of social media is so threatening that various governments shut down access to fight revolution). Just consider what little time and influence an elder has today - compared to daily input via media/internet [how many hours in a week scrolling through your device?]
* This is what's going to fill the vacuum - (v10) the "***Many"*** are Unqualified teachers
	+ ***Insubordinate*** - Only interested in their own opinions & therefore not accountable
	+ ***empty talkers*** - Nothing of value to say
	+ ***deceivers*** - of the brain: your mechanism of body-control (8), worldview; disabled
* To the Cretan Christians, the greatest threat was 'Circumcision' (!!) - though unscriptural, was covered with convincing arguments about God's approval.
* In 1 Tim 6:3-4 we read

3 If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the **sound** words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, **[in other words - in the absence of healthy teaching, there is a vacuum to be filled with something else - and what happens?]** 4 he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for **controversy** and for **quarrels** about words, which produce envy, **dissension**, slander, evil **suspicions**, 5 and **constant friction** among people

* You get controversy in the church, and conspiracy theories- evil suspicions, friction
* This is a HUGE problem in the church of Christ today. ILLUS: Arguments about vaccines splitting churches! Churches! In other words - people refusing to fellowship and essentially raising their opinions to level of doctrine! And conspiracy theories. - Youtube channels with millions of views - and without filled with healthy teaching, Christians buying in to sensational conspiracy theories and witch-hunting.

2Tim 4:3 - the time will come when people will not endure **healthy teaching** but with itching ears accumulate teachers to suit their passions

* Condemned for being or not being circumcised - now for being or not being vaccinated - as though one were more acceptable to God than another by it. Households being overthrown.

Right, we understand what Good Oversight Does.

# [[How is Good Oversight powered?]]

v9 says He must "*be able*" - words of power; From where does the power come?

(9a) He must hold firm to the trustworthy word [scripture] as taught, so that he may be **able**

* >> The **attack** on Truth and the resulting **Sin** and **Destruction** of overturned households is only **overpowered by** the Words of God Himself
	+ ... Who alone is "Trustworthy"
	+ - and therefore speaks "Trustworthy" words -
	+ Words that **serve Consistently Well**, and **Never change**;
* Titus is in authority - but it's not Titus' words, Not even Paul's words. It is the "*trustworthy word as taught*" - It was taught to Titus; He receives it, and passes it on, so that God's Words are preserved from 1 generation to the next, and here in Knysna 21st century, the Preserved **Trustworthy word** is preserving the Family.
* How will anyone, in the face of the many teachers, powerfully bring compelling exhortation and conviction and preserve households?
	+ "Holding Firm" - devoted like a servant to his master.
	+ The many teachers must be silenced - like a muzzle on an ox. The fact is, most of these teachers are not under our authority or influence. They're not in church. But they can still be relatively silenced by making the Truth louder in word, and demonstration as we devotedly hold firm to the Word.
	+ BECAUSE : You cannot separate your **time of worship** from **life as normal** (1Tim4:16!)
* The Compelling instruction and Compelling Rebuke is by the Power of the Compelling Gospel - When we devote ourselves to the Word - we become agents of God's Gospel - The Word that reveals the Saviour - His Gospel of **Reconciliation** and **Redemption** - His Gospel of True Validation, apart from our own efforts, in spite of our sins, by Free Grace of Christ
* When you yourself are overwhelmed at the Trustworthy God, your own life will be a compelling demonstration. Your own words will compellingly testify to His Grace in your life. Your preserved Family will speak words you cannot. And by these, you will be empowered - enabled to oversee as God desires.

# Let's Pray